as 't manifested jtseif in the contemporary society and in the irnrne-.
d:ate prsd:carrent of mankind. Hawthorne, Melville and others of a previous generation had by-passed the raw energy, the crude vitality and the physical gigantism of American society, for they had not their eyes set on the present but on its polar oppositions in the past and in the future. Symbolists and aliegorists, as they were, they had left out the shear sensuous surfaces of American life and had abandoned sensation for sensibility, experience for vision, and direct presenta-
tion of facts for the emblematic indirections of the ultimate values.
Under the impact of Darwinian Naturalism and radical social philo-
sophies, American literature began steadily turning its aesthetic vitaHty towards the complex reality of American life. All the major writers during the 1880's, and later, were collectively posing not the question of what was truth, as their predecessors had done, but the question of what was reality. William James brought to a proverbial culmination in his empirics! philosophy this remarkable shift of the intellectual accent from truth to reality. Whereas truth was unknow-
able in the ultimate sense, reality was knowable and capable of being subjected to the precise disciplines of the human mind. In one form or another, realism became the bedrock idea in American writing, " '

The major protagonists of literary realism were Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Henry James. Mark Twain was document-
ing American life with an almost fierce commitment to regional reality, but the quality of his personal sensibility compelled him to interpose between the fact and experience of reality the nostalgic prism of boyhood reminiscence. Soon the direction of Mark Twain's realism changed towards the terminal points of reality, where it be-
came identified with naturalistic determinism in such work as *The Mysterious Stranger* and *Puddfn'head W/Json.* Ironically enough, the author of the Mississippi Trilogy who had his American hero complete

his education in life in the flexible morality of nature, symbolised by the fluent riparian richness of the big-hearted river, turned to the opposite extreme where the American hero, still a reluctant adolescent, was confronted with reality as a fixed state of being, which on examination turned out to be nothing more than a tin-foiled illusion.

Naturalism was later to advance itself into new rhythms of achievement in the works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, Jack London and Theodore Dreiser. But in Mark Twain's literary career, realism ran th* full course of naturalism; from circumstantial Detail to trie